

Working together towards a town that works for all

FrOme
TOWN COUNCIL

PLAN

2025-27



Introduction from Fiona Barrows, Chair and Leader of FTC, October 2025

Over the past few years, Frome Town Council has grown considerably in response to the evolving needs of our town. Our annual budget now stands at almost £4 million, and we own and manage 36 hectares of land across Frome along with a number of buildings. With this growth comes the need to develop how we work and to strengthen the foundations that will support us in the years ahead.

At the same time, we don't want to lose what makes Frome Town Council unique. We've built a reputation for doing things differently, for finding creative solutions and working collaboratively with our community. That spark - the sense of possibility and innovation - is something we need to hold on to as the challenges facing our community continue to increase, and the future looks evermore uncertain.

We can't fill all the gaps left by national and county-level funding cuts, and nor should we try to replicate their models. They simply don't work. Instead, we have an opportunity to draw on our experience in galvanising community action and building local capacity to chart a new course forward.

This updated strategy sets out our direction for the next two years, through the next election and the first six months beyond it. It builds on the foundations of the last three years rather than marking a radical shift. For the first time it introduces SMART goals and the beginnings of a framework to measure our impact and improve performance.

It reflects our continued commitment to making tangible improvements in the town, while also recognising the quieter, behind-the-scenes work that we do: the convening, collaborating, and strategic thinking that often goes unseen but underpins real, lasting change. It also reaffirms our commitment to participation and innovation - continuing to explore new ways for residents to get involved and help shape our shared future.

Cllr Fiona Barrows



Frome Today: Context and Challenges

Frome is a vibrant and welcoming place to live, work and visit. Known for creativity and independence, we have a diverse range of shops, businesses, and cultural activities. Nestled in eastern Somerset, surrounded by countryside, attractive villages and with a patchwork of parks and open spaces. We are often cited as an example of an “enterprising town” and praised for our community initiatives.

However, like many market towns, Frome faces challenges and doesn't currently work for everybody. Our young people have limited opportunities, and our local businesses often struggle to grow. The rising cost of housing alongside increasing food and energy prices leave some residents feeling left behind. Others grapple with physical and mental health challenges. Somerset Council, our strategic authority, faces severe financial difficulties and must cut services that offer vital support to vulnerable people. And Frome is not alone —as a country and as a planet, we face both climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The people of Frome, however, are our greatest strength. By working together, supporting each other, and learning from our shared experiences, we can tackle these challenges and build a town that works for all.



Photo by Chris Bailey

Community

While Frome has a vibrant community life, it also faces significant social pressures. A quarter of the town's population is under 18—significantly higher than the Somerset and southwest average of 17%. This youthful demographic brings great energy and potential but also creates growing demands for youth services, mental health support, and extracurricular activities. While local organisations have worked hard to bridge service gaps, more work is needed to ensure young people receive the support they need.

At the other end of the spectrum, 20% of Frome's population is over 65, slightly below the county average of 25%. While this group is smaller than in surrounding areas, the town has developed community-driven solutions to help combat loneliness and provide essential services.



Economy

Frome's economy is largely service based, with creative industries playing a significant role. These sectors, particularly those dependent on tourism and discretionary spending, are vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

Nearby cities like Bath and Bristol offer higher wages and better career opportunities, leading many residents to commute out of town. This creates a weekday population drain and reduces local spending. The current cost-of-living crisis has further impacted small businesses, which face both decreased consumer spending and rising operational cost.



Natural environment

The climate emergency requires both mitigation efforts and adaptation to changing conditions—a global priority with local implications. Frome faces ongoing challenges to protect our natural environment, ensure sustainable development, and enhance biodiversity in our open spaces.

Frome has a diversity of open spaces and local management allows areas to be tailored to community needs, and promote physical and mental health, and social interaction.



Built environment and infrastructure

Recent years have seen surging housing prices, making home ownership increasingly unaffordable, especially for younger generations and those on lower incomes. The shortage of affordable housing - including social and rental homes - led Frome Town Council to declare a housing crisis in 2023. While new developments struggle to meet demand, balancing housing needs with preserving the town's character remains difficult.

Limited public transport has created an over-reliance on cars, leading to congestion. Sustainable travel options, such as cycling and walking routes, remain underdeveloped and poorly connected, often proving impractical for daily use. The train service can be unreliable with long gaps between services.

Who we are

Frome Town Council has a reputation for being bold and ambitious. Our vision is of a town that is sustainable, inclusive and prosperous, with a community that is resilient, happy and able to shape its own future.

The golden thread running through our work is building Frome's economic, social, and environmental resilience - ensuring our town can weather wider challenges.

Frome Town Council does not provide resource-heavy services like social care, education, waste collection and road management. Instead, our purpose is simple: to make Frome a better place to live and work, for everyone.

With small budgets, limited statutory power, and few traditional responsibilities, we rely on creativity, collaboration, and community energy to get things done. We aim to balance ambition with practical can-do, remaining adaptable and nimble as we grow.

Our funding comes primarily from Council Tax - directly from our community. We are committed to delivering excellent value for money, and ensuring that Frome sees tangible benefits from our work.

What's next?

The role of Frome Town Council is evolving in response to county-level funding cuts and devolution. We must not only respond to immediate needs but also take a more strategic, long-term approach.

We believe locally managed services and assets lead to better outcomes, and as we take on more responsibility we will continue to work in genuine partnership with our community - harnessing the knowledge, skills and passion of the people who are already helping to build a more resilient, compassionate and fair Frome.

This Council Plan builds on the past three years of responding to urgent challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and the threat of losing key local assets. Looking ahead, our focus shifts from response to consolidation and securing tangible and lasting benefits for the town. It sets out our overarching aims and priorities for the next two years, and is shaped by engagement with residents, businesses and community groups.



How we work

We work in many ways, including:

- ♦ We **advocate** for our town and its needs, and try to ensure all voices are heard, particularly those which might otherwise be overlooked.
- ♦ We help to **coordinate** local organisations - like Somerset Council, health services, emergency services, and community groups - to work better together and achieve more.
- ♦ We **connect** people with local services and available support.
- ♦ We **nurture** new community initiatives and help develop innovative solutions to local challenges.
- ♦ We **protect and enhance** vital community assets, and manage key open spaces including Victoria Park, the Old Showfield, and Rodden Meadow.
- ♦ We **organise** town events throughout the year, from drone shows to the Christmas Lights switch-on, and enable other organisations to hold events.
- ♦ We **co-design** projects, spaces and events with partners and the community.

Aim one: Grow community wellbeing

Grow a strong, connected, and resilient community where everyone feels they belong, our most vulnerable residents are supported, and people receive help before reaching crisis point.

What we've been doing

In our previous Council Plan, we focused on addressing the cost-of-living crisis. We established a Community Hub at the Town Hall to connect people with local support, increased backing for community groups and organisations, and used our communications to raise awareness of available help.

We strengthened our partnership with Fair Frome, the local food bank, and supported neighbourhood initiatives to build local connections and promote cohesion.

Focus for the next two years

We aim to strengthen Frome's capacity to provide early help services, ensuring residents can access support before reaching crisis point, and mitigating the impact of external service cuts. We will also prioritise children and young people, creating opportunities for them to actively shape their town.

Objectives

- ◆ Develop a thriving community space at the Key Centre, increasing occupancy by 50%.
- ◆ Shape a strategic approach to supporting local projects that fill identified gaps in provision and attract grant funding.
- ◆ Improve the impact and reach of the FTC Grants Programme through alignment with council priorities, tracking funding distribution, measuring residents reached, and identifying areas of greatest impact.
- ◆ Ensure children and young people are meaningfully involved in local decision-making, including through a participatory grant-making project.
- ◆ Ensure new and devolved assets, particularly open spaces, reflect community needs and align with our Play Strategy.



Aim two: Support a thriving town

Foster a vibrant local economy with opportunities for young people, a thriving town centre, and investment in growth projects.

What we've been doing

We prioritised Frome town centre, hiring a Town Centre Ranger and Town Centre

Co-ordinator to improve cleanliness, appearance and activity.

We also developed a new Discover Frome website to promote local businesses and events.

Focus for the next two years

We will continue to make the town centre cleaner, safer, and more welcoming, while stepping up to play a strategic role in economic development, preparing Frome for opportunities from the new regional authority.

Objectives

- ◆ Produce a Town Prospectus defining Frome's identity and potential for economic growth, including options for strategic investment and funding.
- ◆ Explore post-16 education opportunities, working with the Frome Chamber of Commerce, Somerset Council, University Centre Somerset College Group, and (subject to Planning Inquiry) LVA.
- ◆ Animate Frome Riverside in line with a co-designed vision, utilising devolved land and market rights, measuring success through increase in footfall.
- ◆ Ensure reliable, cost-effective and inclusive public toilet provision in the centre of Frome, aligned with a co-created vision for the area.
- ◆ Establish a partnership between Somerset Council, FTC, and local businesses for daily rubbish collection, install 20 new recycling bins, and implement quarterly graffiti clean-ups.



Aim three: Cultivate environmental sustainability

Build environmental resilience by enhancing biodiversity, reducing emissions and waste, and adapting to the effects of climate change.

What we've been doing

Through our innovative partnership with Edventure and Frome Medical Practice, Green and Healthy Frome, we have explored how climate action improves health and reduces costs. We delivered a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Safer

School Streets project.

We have also continued to enhance and protect Frome's biodiversity, managing our open spaces to support wildlife, improve habitats and connect nature across the town.

Focus for the next two years

We will focus on home retrofit to reduce energy costs and improve health, work with local businesses and partners to increase renewable energy generation, and continue to enhance biodiversity, including initiatives for the River Frome. We will also identify a suitable site for a reuse centre to promote a circular economy.



Objectives

- ◆ Ensure Adderwell, Rodden Meadow and Community Woodland have co-created management plans with key objectives to maintain and enhance biodiversity of the sites.
- ◆ Plant 5000 trees across Frome, including a community woodland of 3000 trees, with 85% alive a year later.
- ◆ Campaign to improve the ecological health and biodiversity of the River Frome, with 6 monthly meetings to be held with key stakeholders.
- ◆ Increase local renewable electricity generation by 5% per year compared to 2020 baseline.
- ◆ Support 100 homes annually to become more energy-efficient.
- ◆ Promote a local circular economy through a community reuse centre with a sustainable financial model.

Aim four: Improve assets and infrastructure

Ensure Frome's physical infrastructure and assets support future growth and community needs.

What we've been doing

We manage our open spaces to be inclusive, biodiverse, and active, supporting community wellbeing and wildlife. We have secured new local assets, including 57 open spaces, the Key

Centre, and Market Yard Toilets from Somerset Council, and taken on Adderwell Water Meadow, a community woodland at Spring Gardens, and Broadway Community Garden.

We have advocated for sustainable and affordable housing and promoted active travel, including safer walking and cycling routes.

Focus for the next two years

We will maintain and enhance all our new assets, working with the community to maximise their use and value. We will also focus on ensuring the town's voice is heard in regional and local planning and development.

Objectives

- ◆ Organise a Citizen's Assembly to provide input into Somerset's Local Plan.
- ◆ Collaborate with neighbouring parishes to influence a Movement Strategy and Somerset Council's Local Transport Plan.
- ◆ Continue to advocate for sustainable development, including 30% affordable housing, active travel infrastructure, solar panels, energy efficiency measures, and S106 agreements that meet Frome's needs.
- ◆ Support campaigns for improvements to public transport, including increased coverage and frequency of local bus services.
- ◆ Deliver a new skatepark and co-designed social space for teenagers in Mary Baily Playing Fields.



Photo by Steve Creffield

Aim five: Be a bold and effective town council

Be a bold and effective council that uses resources wisely, innovates with purpose and is prepared to meet future challenges.

What we've been doing

We have improved transparency and accountability through livestreamed meetings, and making decision-making more visible and inclusive. We have invested in staff training and development and commissioned a peer review to guide our next steps.

Focus for the next two years

We will implement a comprehensive improvement and transition programme to strengthen governance, systems, and structures. We will focus on effectiveness, impact, participation, and innovation, and ensure Frome Town Council continues to communicate clearly, engage residents, and advocate boldly.



Objectives

- ◆ Develop and implement an improvement plan to strengthen governance and processes.
- ◆ Review staff structure to support both long-term vision and short-term priorities.
- ◆ Introduce an impact evaluation framework to measure the council's effectiveness.
- ◆ Establish an innovative digital engagement platform, aiming for 10% of residents contributing.
- ◆ Enhance communication to build greater understanding and trust in Frome Town Council, measured through feedback and sentiment analysis.
- ◆ Continue to push boundaries, advocate for the town, and deliver innovative projects that maintain FTC's pioneering role beyond Frome.

Get involved

At a time of uncertainty and growing challenges, Frome Town Council is determined to step up and deliver for our community. But we can't do it alone.

We need your ideas, energy, and engagement to help shape a town we can all be proud of.

Join us, challenge us, and help us build a Frome that works for everyone.



Credit: Phil Blakemore

Get in touch

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🏠 Frome Town Hall
Christchurch St West
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Monday-Thursday: 9am-5pm

Friday: 9am-4:30pm

Weekends: Closed

Talk to your councillor

Our 17 Frome Town Councillors work across 8 wards in Frome.

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frometowncouncil.gov.uk/councillors

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